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SUBJECT: CHAD EXPLAINS RESERVATIONS ON UN BORDER FORCE

REF: NDJAMENA 205 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Chad supports a UN force of police and gendarmes to protect refugees, displaced Chadians, and humanitarian workers on its border with Sudan, but not proposals for a much larger military force, Chad's Foreign Minister told the Ambassador March 20. He said a "massive" force ran the risk of provoking Chad's neighbors, had no political role to play or peacekeeping mission to pursue in Chad, and is not necessary anyway. As suggested in ref, we hope consideration will be given to taking up the offer for a force that addresses the urgent need to assure humanitarian security in eastern Chad. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On March 20, on the eve of Foreign Minister Allam-mi's departure for consultations in New York, the Ambassador met with him to discuss proposals for a UN force on Chad's eastern border with Sudan. The Ambassador stressed U.S. concern over violence in eastern Chad. He highlighted U.S. support for rapid deployment of an international force with a mandate to protect civilians and deter cross-border attacks.

¶3. (SBU) Allam-mi said he is traveling to New York to clear up misunderstandings with the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). He said Chad had asked for help in protecting Sudanese refugees, displaced Chadians, and humanitarian workers in eastern Chad. It had sought a light force of police and gendarmes. The force would include Chadians, other Africans, and representatives from other countries. It would be well equipped, including necessary military and air support capabilities. It could receive back-up support from the Chadian and French military.

¶4. (SBU) Instead, Allam-mi stated, the DPKO had proposed deploying a much larger military force. Such a "massive" force ran the risk of "internationalizing" the conflict in Darfur and further destabilizing Chad. A force with as many as 10,000 soldiers could trigger further pressures on Chad if Sudan and Libya decided to allow terrorists and rebels to stage assaults across their borders into Chad. He doubted that a force could be deployed rapidly enough to fend off such attacks. He also questioned whether it should be conducted as a UN peacekeeping mission. How can there be such an operation, he asked, if there is no ceasefire to enforce or agreement with Chadian rebels or with Sudan to defend. It is not the UN's place anyway, he asserted, to negotiate with the Chadian rebels or to encourage an internal political dialogue.

¶5. (SBU) Allam-mi stressed that Chad is not against accepting an international force. But, he argued, one as large as the DPKO has proposed is not necessary. He urged proceeding gradually. If this first phase worked -- and if it did not provoke Sudan or Libya -- it could be expanded in later stages. Pressed on whether Chad is under pressure from Libya on this matter, Allam-mi recalled Tripoli's position opposing a UN force in Darfur. He said Tripoli's position on

a force inside Chad is less clear. He expressed concern that Tripoli has the means to open its border to groups seeking to destabilize Chad. Chad has to go slowly, he reiterated. It is in the middle of Africa and has no choice but to try to balance its relations with its neighbors.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: Allam-mi's comments on a UN force in eastern Chad bring to light fears about the reaction of its neighbors and suspicions about any UN role in addressing Chad's internal political failures. They also provide the opening to explore the terms for a force that would be acceptable to the Chadians, but also effective in meeting the urgent requirements for humanitarian security. Once such a force is in place, it will be possible to build from there. As suggested in ref, we hope such an approach will be considered.

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